

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
/066 W

-----071866 272219Z /66

R 271446Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5644
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 3546

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, GR
SUBJECT: RUMORS OF CABINET RESTRUCTURING

1. WITH PARLIAMENT IN RECESS AND PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS IN RHODES UNTIL AFTER THE GREEK EASTER HOLIDAYS, ATHENS IS WITNESSING A NOTICEABLE LULL IN THE NORMAL POLITICAL ACTIVITY. ONE EXCEPTION, HOWEVER, IS THE CONTINUED INTENSE SPECULATION THAT CARAMANLIS WILL SOON RESHUFFLE HIS MINISTERIAL CABINET. ONE LINE OF REASONING IS THAT CARAMANLIS HAS BEEN GREATLY DISAPPOINTED IN THE POOR PERFORMANCE OF HIS MINISTERS SINCE THEIR APPOINTMENT IN NOVEMBER 1977 AND WANTS TO IMPROVE THE GOVERNMENT'S SHOWING BY BRINGING IN NEW PEOPLE. A SECOND THOUGHT IS THAT THE PRIME MINISTER SEEKS TO BROADEN THE BASE OF HIS GOVERNMENT AS HE PREPARES GREECE FOR CRITICAL PROBLEMS TO BE FACED LATER THIS YEAR AND NEXT -- ESPECIALLY THE ISSUE OF GREEK ENTRY INTO THE EC. A THIRD ARGUMENT RUNS THAT CARAMANLIS WILL ACT TO BRING INTO HIS GOVERNMENT DISAFFECTED FACTIONS FROM THE POLITICAL CENTER SO AS TO BETTER CONFRONT WHAT IS SEEN IN SOME SECTORS AS A GROWING CHALLENGE BY PASOK'S PAPANDREOU.

2. THE FOREMOST FIGURE INVOLVED IN THE SPECULATION OVER THE CABINET RESHUFFLE IS CONSTANTINE MITSOTAKIS, CURRENTLY LEADER OF THE
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NEW-LIBERAL PARTY WHOSE POLITICAL PROWESS IS WIDELY ACKNOWLEDGED EVEN BY HIS CRITICS. THE RATIONAL IS THAT MITSOTAKIS, A MAN POSSESSING CONSIDERABLE LEADERSHIP ABILITIES, BY ENTERING THE GOVERNMENT WILL THEN BE GROOMED AS CARAMANLIS' HEIR. SUCH A MOVE, OF COURSE, WOULD BE STRONGLY OPPOSED BY OTHERS IN THE NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY -- SUCH AS AVEROFF, RALLIS AND PAPALIGOURAS -- WHO ASPIRE TO SUCCEED CARAMANLIS AND ARE CONCERNED AT THE ADDED

COMPETITION PRESENTED BY MITSOTAKIS. SOURCES CLOSE TO MITSOTAKIS ARE LETTING IT BE KNOWN THAT CARAMANLIS TWICE HAS OFFERED HIM THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, BUT THESE SOURCES STRESS THAT MITSOTAKIS IS HOLDING OUT FOR THE KEY POSITION OF MINISTER OF COORDINATION.

3. OTHER "OUTSIDERS" SAID TO BE IN THE RUNNING FOR AN APPOINTMENT IN THE GOVERNMENT INCLUDE SEVERAL FORMER UNION OF THE DEMOCRATIC CENTER (UDC) DEPUTIES OF CONSIDERABLE PRESTIGE WHO HAVE BROKEN WITH THAT PARTY AND BECOME INDEPENDENTS IN THE PARLIAMENT. FOR INSTANCE, ATHANASSIOS KENELLOPOULOS, WHO HAS SERVED IN DIFFERENT MINISTERIAL POSTS IN VARIOUS PAST GOVERNMENTS, IS RUMORED IN SOME CIRCLES TO BE IN LINE FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE ECONOMICS. JOHN PESMAZOGLOU, ALSO A FORMER MINISTER WHO IS PRESENTLY HEAD OF THE MIXED GREEK-EC PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE, IS REPORTED BY SOME TO BE DESTINED FOR THE POSITION OF MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO WITH RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE NEGOTIATIONS INVOLVING GREECE'S ENTRY INTO THE EC. WHILE ORDINARILY IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT FOR EITHER OF THESE TWO POLITICIANS, WITH THEIR LONG-STANDING ESTRANGEMENT FROM MITSOTAKIS OVER THE 1965 APOSTASY, TO PARTICIPATE WITH HIM IN THE SAME GOVERNMENT, THERE ARE THOSE WHO MAINTAIN THAT THIS OBSTACLE WOULD BE OVERCOME BECAUSE OF THE BROAD-BASED NATURE OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT HEADED BY CARAMANLIS.

4. AMONG THE MINISTERS MOST LIKELY TO GO, ACCORDING TO THE RUMOR MILL, ARE FOREIGN MINISTER PAPALIGOURAS, WHO IS SEEM AS SUFFERING FROM CONTINUING HEALTH PROBLEMS AND IS UNABLE TO COME
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TO GRIPS WITH THE MANY COMPLEX FOREIGN AFFAIRS ISSUES FACING GREECE. GEORGE RALLIS' TENURE AS MINISTER OF COORDINATION IS ALSO REPORTEDLY PRECARIOUS SINCE HIS IS SAID TO HAVE FAILED TO OVERCOME HIS LACK OF EXPERIENCE ON ECONOMIC MATTERS AND HAS NOT TAKEN CHARGE OF HIS IMPORTANT MINISTRY AS EFFECTIVELY AS CARAMANLIS WISHED. MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND ENERGY MILTIADES EVERT, THE YOUNGEST OF THE TOP CABINET MEMBERS, IS ALSO A FAVORITE CANDIDATE TO BE REPLACED, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE OF HIS INFLUENTIAL ROLE IN THE FORMATION OF A SPECIAL PRESSURE GROUP WITHIN THE NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY PRESSING FOR BETTER PARTY ORGANIZATION, AN ACTION WHICH HAS IRRITATED SOME OF THE PARTY ESTABLISHMENT.

5. COMMENT: AT THIS POINT, THE COMMENTARY ABOUT A CABINET RESHUFFLE IS SPECULATIVE AND IN ANY EVENT IT WOULD NOT BE LIKELY TO OCCUR UNTIL AFTER THE EASTER HOLIDAYS AND THE PRIME MINISTER'S TRIP TO WESTERN EUROPE THE FIRST WEEK OF MAY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CABINET, PERSONNEL ASSIGNMENTS, PERSONNEL MOVEMENTS, ALLEGATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978ATHENS03546
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780181-0066
Format: TEL
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780412/aaaaajkw.tel
Line Count: 111
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: dd4bbda6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2835198
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RUMORS OF CABINET RESTRUCTURING
TAGS: PINT, GR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/dd4bbda6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014